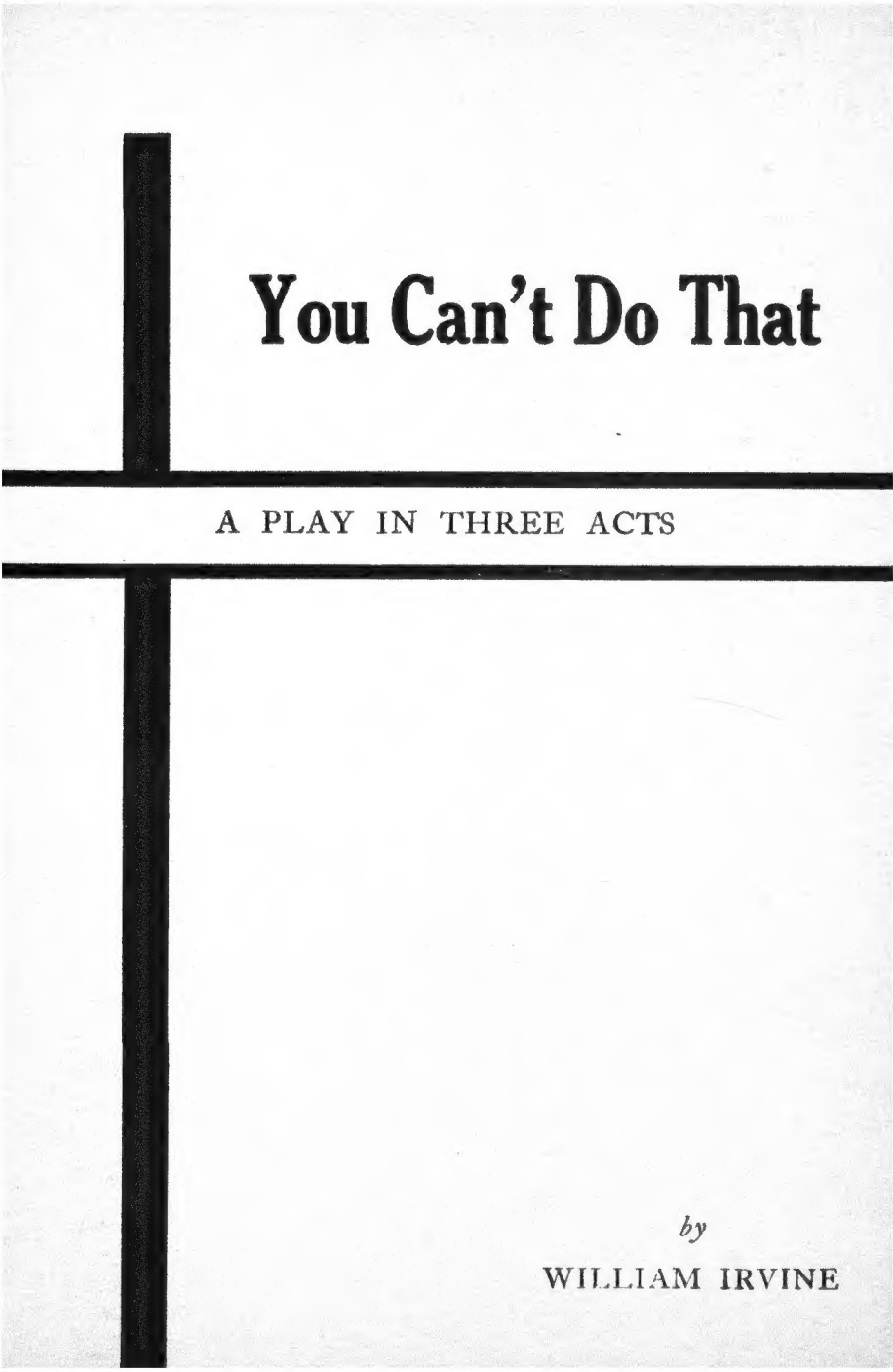




You Can't Do That

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

by
WILLIAM IRVINE

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TORONTO

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Characters

(In order of appearance)

LINDA STROME, *the Prime Minister's niece.*

LORRIE JACKSON, *a wealthy young man.*

HON. JOHN FARRELL, *Minister of Labour.*

VINEY CORSBY, *John's fiancée.*

RT. HON. EUGENE STROME, *Prime Minister.*

HON. WESTWOOD STRACHAN, *Minister of Finance.*

LOIS DECHENE, {
SHEILA MCCOY, { *Friends of Linda and Lorrie.*

HON. HORACE CRINGLING, *Minister of Justice.*

HON. LEON PAPINEAU, *Secretary of State.*

HON. HOWARD McCUNE, *Minister of Trade and Commerce.*

PARKER, *McCune's Secretary.*

MARSHALL, *a Party man.*

HORACE SILVERTON, *President of The Bankers' Association.*

GERALD THORPE, K.C., LL.B., *Legal counsel.*

HENRY SLOOP, *Deputy Minister of Finance.*

ACT I

The verandah of the Prime Minister's home in Ottawa.
Sunday afternoon, Summer, 193

ACT II

SCENE 1—A small island near the mouth of the St. Lawrence.
Two days later.

SCENE 2—The office of Hon. Howard McCune.
Eight days later.

ACT III

The island. Early morning, two days later.

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is less than 200, \$3.00; if more, \$5.00.

ALL THE INCIDENTS AND CHARACTERS
OF THIS PLAY ARE WHOLLY IMAGINARY.

You Can't Do That

ACT I.

The verandah of the Prime Minister's home in Ottawa. It is attractively furnished with wicker and gaily striped canvas furniture. Through the opening at the back we get a glimpse of the garden, and the blue sky of a summer day. To reach the front door of the house we go to the right. The tennis court is to the left. It is Sunday afternoon.

When the curtain rises, the stage is empty for a moment. Then Belinda Strome, an attractive girl in tennis clothes, comes quickly along the porch and beckons eagerly to someone to follow her. She is in a state of suppressed excitement. From off stage a voice calls "Service!" and there is the sharp plank of a tennis ball. Belinda is joined by Lorrie Jackson, a stout, vigorous man of forty, who is devoted to Linda. He wears flannels, a blazer, and has his racquet under his arm. They advance into the room.

LINDA. Lorrie! Is it fixed?

LORRIE. All fixed, m'lady.

LINDA. You got the ham, and the bread, and the tent?

LORRIE. The grub's all landed, and the tent's up.

LINDA. And how's the launch?

LORRIE. Her engine's just been overhauled, and the gas tank filled. The *Mayflower*, as the poet said, sails with the next tide.

LINDA. Can you trust your man not to go back for them, no matter how much noise they make?

LORRIE. I'm sure I can trust him . . . and anyway, he's stone deaf.

LINDA. Marvellous! Thank you ever so much, Lorrie. What would I do without you!

LORRIE. (*grinning*) Get another errand boy, I suppose.

LINDA. (*looking off left.*) They're still playing. When they finish this set, I want you to play with Viney, while I work on Farrell.

LORRIE. O. K. Anything you say goes. But I'll bet you a nickel he won't play.

LINDA. Why not? He's got nerve.

LORRIE. I know, but he's got a Scotch grandmother, and it makes him cautious. He's too canny to risk his reputation in political vaudeville.

LINDA. I'm going to give him the chance.

LORRIE. Will you tell him everything?

LINDA. Not unless I'm sure he's going to help.

LORRIE. You're in love with Farrell.

LINDA. (*smiling.*) I have no secrets from you, Lorrie.

LORRIE. Well, he's not in love with you.

LINDA. No, he's not. He's scarcely ever seen me, although I've been part of the landscape for three years.

LORRIE. Funny, isn't it? I love you, and you never see me. You love Farrell, and he never sees you. He loves Viney, and she sees nothing in him but the "Honourable."

LINDA. In other words, "There ain't no justice!"

LORRIE. Viney's rich, you know. Her old man cleaned up a couple of millions during the war.

LINDA. Lorrie, that's mean! I think he's just . . . dazzled a little by her beauty, her lovely home, . . . and her throwing herself at him. But John's not a fortune hunter.

LORRIE. Maybe not, maybe not, but a couple of million are not to be sneezed at.

LINDA. Then why don't you stop sneezing at it yourself?

LORRIE. Oh, I say. . . . Linda, you know how I am . . . oh darn it, you know how I feel about you!

LINDA. Yes, I know. And sometimes I wish you'd find a sweet little girl, and fall for her like a ton of bricks. Did you invite Lois and Sheila to the party?

LORRIE. Oh, sure! They're keen. Though of course, they don't know what's in the wind.

LINDA. No. But I had to have them. I couldn't let Viney be the only female. And I may need those girls for another reason . . . they're good sports.

LORRIE. Nice kids, too. Oh say, I'm putting a parable in the water keg.

LINDA. A what? You mustn't poison them, you know.

LORRIE. On the contrary, this will be extremely good for them. I mean, there's going to be a nice little lesson connected with that water keg, which your uncle won't forget in a hurry.

LINDA. Poor uncle . . . I rather hate to do this to him. He is a dear . . . but such a dodo. I've always suspected I'd make a better prime minister than he would.

LORRIE. (*gallantly*) Of course you would.

LINDA. So now I'm going to have a shot at it.

LORRIE. You're what?

LINDA. I said, I'm going to have a shot at it.

LORRIE. (*thoroughly alarmed.*) Look here, you're not going to interfere with things while the cabinet members are away?

LINDA. That's just what I intend to do. Up to now I've told you that we were playing a sort of joke on them . . . giving them a chance to get back to primitive conditions, and wrestle with nature, as they're so good at telling other people to do. Tighten their belts, and all that. But I haven't told you that while they're on the island, I'm going to be Prime Minister of this country for about ten days.

LORRIE. (*trying to grasp it.*) In Ottawa?

LINDA. No, by proxy, as it were. From the Mount Royal Hotel in Montreal, where my uncle will be 'In conference with experts.'

LORRIE. Linda, you're crazy! You'll never get away with it! What about the rest of the cabinet?

LINDA. All the rest are 'Yes' men. Anyhow, four of them are on holiday, and three are sick. The three invalids think the four who are away will make up the quorum, and the four who are away will think the same about the others. McCune will be acting Prime Minister. He's a faithful creature, and the best administrator of the lot.

LORRIE. Does he know about it?

LINDA. Oh my, no! He really wants to do what I'm going to have him do, but he would never do it, if he knew where his orders were coming from.

LORRIE. But Linda, this is absurd . . . it's fantastic . . . it's *awful*! What if McCune finds out?

LINDA. We've got to take that chance.

LORRIE. But my gosh . . . this is serious! I mean, I'm sure it's treason. Have you thought of what will happen to you if. . . .

LINDA. (*cutting him short.*) I've thought of everything. I may be shot at dawn. I don't care. I'm so darn sick of watching a lot of pussy-footing old politicians doing nothing, I've decided to get them out of the way, and DO something for a change. (*turning on him.*) Can you think of any other way of getting things done?

LORRIE. No, but . . .

LINDA. Well, then!

LORRIE. But, Linda, the whole thing is crazy . . . it's impossible!

LINDA. I know. That's why we're doing it. Now . . . are you going to help me, or are you getting cold feet? *(She goes back and looks off left.)* Hurry up and make up your mind. They've finished the set.

LORRIE. *(miserably)* Well, I do think you might have told me sooner what it was all about . . . but if you're really determined. . .

LINDA. I am, absolutely!

LORRIE. Then I guess we go through with it.

LINDA. Atta boy, Lorrie! I knew I could count on you. You've got what it takes.

Miss Viney Corsby and the Hon. John Farrell come in from the left. They too, have their racquets and are in tennis attire. Viney is slight and fair, giving a deceptive air of fragility. Her dress is a little too fussy for its purpose. Hon. John Farrell, Minister of Labour, is amazingly young to have gained such a position. No one but John knows the whole desperate story of his progress from the converted freight car where he was born to these present surroundings. He is tall, well-built, rather good-looking, though his face in repose has a bitter expression.

JOHN. Here they are . . . loafing about in the shade!

LINDA. I suppose a Minister of Labour just can't bear to see people loaf?

JOHN. Not when he's labouring like a black-fellow himself. *(mopping his brow)* You've no idea what devilish energy lurks in Viney's delicate frame!

VINEY. *(sitting down languidly)* Don't be silly, John.

LINDA. Well, we'll have tea before we play again. Lorrie, be an angel and get the food.

(Lorrie goes out right. Linda and John bring up the chairs to form a group.)

LINDA. Leave one for uncle . . . he'll be down in a minute.

(Lorrie returns pushing the tea wagon. Linda sits down and begins to serve tea.)

LORRIE. *(passing around the tea.)* Who won the set?

VINEY. I did. 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

LORRIE. Good for you! Have some tea?

JOHN. I'm afraid I took up tennis too late to be in Viney's class. You see, when she began running around a tennis

court, I was still running around my paper route.

LINDA. Was that fun . . . the paper route, I mean?

JOHN. It wasn't bad . . . until I started reading the papers. I haven't had a happy moment since.

The Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Eugene Strome, enters from the right. He is a rotund, good-natured man in his sixties. He has the appearance of an easy going, country gentleman, suave and courteous. In addition he has a flair for diplomacy, indispensable to a Prime Minister. He is very bald, and has a constant habit of holding his paunch in his arms as though he enjoyed embracing it.

STROME. Ah, good afternoon, everyone!

LORRIE. Good afternoon, Mr. Strome.

STROME. How d'ye do, Miss Corshy. (*Bows, acknowledges John's smile with a nod, and takes the chair by Linda, centre stage.*) I'm just in time, I see.

LINDA. Yes, you always seem to know exactly when its time for tea . . . or a division. Pass the sandwiches. Lorrie.

STROME. How do you like our little court here, Miss Corshy?

VINEY. Oh, it's splendid!

STROME. I used to be very fond of a game myself, but lately of course, I don't find time for it. (*He sighs, and sits back looking like a martyr.*)

LINDA. Did you know that Uncle used to be the champion of Ottawa? He had a forearm drive that people came miles to see.

VINEY. Really, how interesting!

STROME. That was many years ago, in the dear Countess of Minto's time. I remember her Excellency made the presentation.

VINEY. (*who adores royalty.*) Oh, did you see in yesterday's paper that the Prince of Wales is really going to get engaged?

LORRIE. Another good man gone!

JOHN. That ought to fix unemployment, international exchange, and stop a war in Europe.

STROME. You may scoff, young man, but it would be just as well if our Sovereign were married.

JOHN. Why so important for the sovereign?

STROME. Marriage is good for everyone.

LINDA. Yes, Uncle, a bashful bachelor of sixty winters

should be a real authority on the subject.

STROME. My day may come yet. It wouldn't be so pleasant for you if I had a nagging wife.

LINDA. Oh, don't let me stand in your way!

STROME. Anyhow, if I had my life to live over again, I'd devote myself to making some beautiful woman happy.

LORRIE. Hear, hear!

STROME. There would be some satisfaction in that. Public life is a thankless job.

VINEY. Oh, Mr. Strome, you can't mean that!

STROME. I do mean it.

VINEY. I think its perfectly marvellous to be a Prime Minister.

LORRIE. The leader of the Opposition seems to think so too . . . he's so anxious about it.

VINEY. But what I mean is, it must be wonderful to go places, to banquets, and receptions, and meet all the important people.

STROME. Oh, there are some compensations.

VINEY. You're a Right Honourable, too, aren't you, Mr. Strome?

STROME. Hm . . . yes. Technically.

VINEY. What is a 'Right' Honourable? (*looking pathetically at John.*) Is there a 'Wrong' Honourable?

LORRIE. Yes, lots of them.

VINEY. Really?

STROME. A Right Honourable is just a recognition for long service . . . a sort of old man's title.

VINEY. I think it's all so fascinating. John, dear, take my cup, please.

LORRIE. (*as he lights Strome's cigarette.*) Did you see the report of Bolton's speech at Winnipeg?

STROME. Yes, as usual. Making cheap capital out of the country's misfortunes.

JOHN. I suppose that's the special privilege of the Opposition.

STROME. That's so, but there are limits. The present leader of the Opposition is an unscrupulous scoundrel. There is absolutely nothing he would not do to gain his own ends.

VINEY. Why, I thought you and Mr. Bolton were at school together!

STROME. That is an unfortunate fact, Miss Corsby, which I try to forget. I have no respect for the man.

LINDA. I'm afraid they're too much like one another to like one another.

STROME. (*pained*) That's not very clever, Linda.

LINDA. Never mind, Uncle, you'll be in the Opposition some day, and then you'll get back at him.

JOHN. That's even less clever.

LINDA. I don't try to be clever . . . only comforting. Anyway, politics is a dull subject. Let's talk about something else.

JOHN. Did you read about the thrilling chase the Mounties gave the kidnappers in B.C.?

(*At the word kidnappers Lorrie starts guiltily.*)

STROME. Yes. I am glad they have been brought to justice. Kidnapping is a dastardly crime . . . dastardly!

LINDA. (*with perfect steadiness.*) It certainly is. Have a peppermint, anyone?

VINEY. I think its perfectly awful to steal little children, or grown up people, and hide them in filthy dirty places, without decent food or anything. (*She takes a peppermint.*)

STROME. I agree with you. Miss Corsby. We might even follow the example of our neighbour to the south and prescribe the death penalty for kidnappers.

LINDA. And their accomplices, Uncle.

STROME. Certainly. And their accomplices.

(*Poor Lorrie chokes, coughs, drops his cigarette, which rolls under his chair, causing a general commotion.*)

VINEY. Look out!

LINDA. (*coming round to him.*) There it is . . . step on it!

LORRIE. Oh, I say, I'm awfully sorry. I don't know what made me do that.

STROME. (*unctuously*) Those who play with fire, you know, get burnt.

LORRIE. Yes, that's what I'm afraid of . . . I mean . . . I hope I haven't spoilt the floor.

LINDA. Never mind, Lorrie. For the next two days you can throw your smokes about, and no one will mind but the poor fish.

VINEY. Oh yes, it's to-morrow we're going down the river!

LORRIE. (*the condemned.*) Yes, it's to-morrow.

STROME. I'm rather looking forward to this nautical expedition of yours, Jackson. I need a rest.

LINDA. A couple of days in the open air will do you good.

STROME. We leave to-morrow after the luncheon, don't

we?

LORRIE. Just as soon as the Harbour Board are through with you. There will be yourself, Farrell here, Cringling, Papineau, and Strachan.

VINEY. Don't forget little me!

LORRIE. (*smiling at her.*) Of course not. Miss Corsby . . . and two other nice girls.

VINEY. Do I know them?

LORRIE. I don't think so. They're from McGill.

VINEY. Are you coming, Linda?

LINDA. Worse luck, I've got a heavy date for to-morrow afternoon.

STROME. You know, of course, that we must be back in Ottawa on Wednesday for a cabinet meeting?

LORRIE. Oh yes. We're going right down to the Gulf, but my new launch can make thirty-five knots down river.

STROME. Fine! I want a sniff of the briny.

VINEY. What's the name of the boat, Mr. Jackson?

LORRIE. The *Mayflower*.

VINEY. Oh, isn't that romantic!

LORRIE. What about a set of singles, Miss Corsby?

VINEY. (*coquettishly*) I warn you . . . this is my lucky day!

(*The young people all rise.*)

STROME. Could we talk business for a moment, Farrell?

JOHN. Oh . . . yes, certainly. (*Linda wheels out the tea wagon. The others move towards the court.*)

VINEY. Come out as soon as you've finished, John.

(*Lorrie and Viney go out.*)

STROME. (*sitting back and holding his paunch*) When we meet on Wednesday for the Mayor's Conference, we would like you to be our spokesman.

JOHN. (*eagerly*) Yes?

STROME. Strachan and I both feel you are the man to speak for us.

JOHN. (*flattered and hopeful.*) Does that mean. . . .

STROME. I've been pestered all week by these delegations of money cranks.

JOHN. (*grinning*) A crank can be very useful for getting things started.

STROME. (*pursing his lips and frowning at this levity*) I'm strongly convinced that all this talk about financial reform is purely a political manoeuvre. The Opposition

are playing it up for all it's worth.

JOHN. But surely all the Mayors at the Conference don't belong to the Opposition?

STROME. You'd be surprised. I've checked up on every one of them. Anyway, they're all anxious to dump their relief responsibilities on us. If they succeed, they'll be re-elected for their cleverness. I know my politics, Farrell. We can't take these reformers too seriously.

JOHN. I must say I disagree with you there. I think they're a fairly sincere lot of men, and have some jolly good arguments on their side.

STROME. (*patiently*) Just what are these arguments?

JOHN. Well, it is true, is it not, that unemployment is still increasing?

STROME. (*with a heart-felt sigh*) Unfortunately, yes.

JOHN. And the cost of relief is too much for the towns and provinces? They're head over heels in debt, and their credit is exhausted.

STROME. It is.

JOHN. Now, the Dominion is the only government with power to issue and control currency and credit?

STROME. (*nodding*) The Fathers of Confederation made that wise provision.

JOHN. Then the Dominion holds the key to the situation. It has a method of financing closed to everybody else. I've always held that the Dominion should use that key . . . that it should use the credit of the nation in the interest of the people . . . (*eagerly*) Is . . . is that what you want me to tell the mayors . . . that we'll do it?

STROME. No! Nothing of the kind! The cabinet will refuse the Mayors' demand at the meeting on Wednesday.

JOHN. Then . . . then why in blazes do you want *me* to tell them so?

STROME. The very fact that you believe in their policy makes you the logical man to tell them why it can't be done.

JOHN. (*hotly*) I won't do it!

STROME. Oh, come, come. It's quite easy. Make a statement to the effect that while there is a great deal to be said for the proposal, this is not the time to introduce it, and their method of approach is wrong.

JOHN. But this *is* the time, and in the main, their method is good

STROME. In theory, my dear fellow, in theory. But in

practice . . . God bless me, no. Who was it said that financial reform is "lurid, livid lunacy"? He's right!

JOHN. But what in thunder can we tell these fellows to do?

STROME. (*with a shrug*) Let them go home and balance their budgets. We have to do that ourselves, or the banks will close down on us. (*patting John on the shoulder*) You're young, my dear fellow . . . impetuous and inexperienced in this great game. It's all right to talk monetary reform when it's popular, but to actually reform money . . . God bless me!

JOHN. Why not reform it?

STROME. Well, doing new things starts endless criticism. Besides, when they're done, they're done, and have no more value as a political issue.

JOHN. I don't get that.

STROME. It's very simple. The Liberals are elected to reduce the tariff by the amount the Conservatives raised it. Then the Conservatives are elected to raise the tariff by the amount the Liberals have lowered it. In this way the issue is always the same for the convenience of democracy, and the political policy is stabilized.

JOHN. I see. Political policy is like a carrot on a stick dangled in front of a donkey . . . to be chased, but never caught.

(*A pause.*)

STROME. Farrell, you're young, and you have a great career ahead if you'll keep in mind what I've always told you . . . 'Never pour out the dirty water till the clean comes in.'

JOHN. But that's nonsense!

STROME. My dear boy, I have been running the country on that maxim for years.

JOHN. Then I begin to understand what's the matter with the country.

(*Linda runs in.*)

LINDA. Uncle, Lorrie and Viney want you to give them a tennis lesson.

STROME. Who, me?

LINDA. Yes, be a dear and show them how to hold the racquets for the forearm drive. They're out their arguing about it now.

STROME. Nonsense, Linda. God bless me, I haven't had a

racquet in my hand for years. . . .

LINDA. But a champion never forgets how. (*She pulls him playfully by the lapels.*) You don't have to play . . . just show them the grip.

STROME. Well, I suppose I could always do that.

LINDA. Of course you can. Come along. (*He goes out, very flattered, squaring his shoulders. As he disappears, every trace of Linda's pretty cajoling attitude vanishes. She becomes as keen as an arrow.*)

LINDA. It worked. (*turning swiftly to John*) Sit down. I want to talk to you.

JOHN. (*a bit bewildered*) That's very charming of you.

LINDA. I want your help in something very important.

JOHN. In that case I should warn you at once that I'm resigning from the cabinet.

LINDA. (*startled*) No! Don't do that! You haven't told Uncle yet, have you?

JOHN. No, not yet.

LINDA. Well, don't. Hold on another week.

JOHN. (*the bitterness of years of futility rising within him.*) What good will that do? Haven't I been holding on for two years, hoping that by some miracle I might some day get something done? Now I'm cured. Politics doesn't mean the control of human lives to your uncle, Miss Strome. To him it's just a sort of game with sides and innings, etc. I won't play that game any longer! I quit.

LINDA. (*eagerly*) Do you want the Mayors' conference to get their financial reform?

JOHN. Eh?

LINDA. I said, do you want the Mayors' conference to get their monetary reform?

JOHN. There's nothing I want more.

LINDA. Do you agree that there's plenty for every person in this country, and nothing keeping it from them but the cowardice of sixteen old men?

JOHN. (*a little dazed*) Yes.

LINDA. Then, will you stay in the Cabinet and help me to get that plenty to the people who need it?

JOHN. (*laughing*) Holy Smoke, Miss Strome, let me get my bearings! I had no idea the Chief had a red hot radical under his roof!

LINDA. No. You're like everyone else in Ottawa. You think because you see me here pouring Uncle's tea and mak-

ing silly conversation, that I haven't a brain in my head, that I don't know what's going on. I'm just as fed up with the merry-go-round as you are . . . more fed up, because I've had more of it. You can't tell me anything about politics. I'm a politician's daughter and a politician's grand-daughter, and a politician's niece. I don't blame you for being disgusted with my uncle. You couldn't change his mind with dynamite. But will you help me get rid of the politicians long enough to get something done?

JOHN. That sounds like an invitation to a revolution.

LINDA. I'm not proposing revolution, or violence, or anything spectacular. It's just . . . unusual, and daring. Have you the courage to do something which, if it fails, might make you a little . . . ridiculous?

JOHN. *(after a little pause)* To be perfectly frank I've been in Ottawa just long enough to become a little suspicious. How do I know this unusual plan of yours is not a deliberate attempt to make me ridiculous . . . and destroy me?

(Linda winces as though he had hit her, and moves away, fighting for control.)

LINDA. I think that is the unkindest thing I ever had said to me in my life.

JOHN. *(going to her)* Oh I'm sorry. I take that back. I'm sure you're sincere. But look here, Linda, let's not do the wild ridiculous thing . . . let's try the reasonable way.

LINDA. We've been reasonable for years. Where does it get us?

JOHN. I know, but individually. Now, let's work together. Let's organize a party. . . .

LINDA. *(mistress of herself again)* Do you call that reasonable? Do you think the thousands of people cut off relief next week can wait a generation for us to build a party up to power?

JOHN. But there you are . . . we've got thousands of supporters already.

LINDA. Do you think so? Do you still think starvation makes people wise? It doesn't. It makes them more afraid . . . they won't stop to reason. But if they see an honest policy actually getting results, they'll support it. That's what I want to do . . . convince people by showing them that *it will work*.

JOHN. Can't you give me an idea what it's all about?

LINDA. (*smiling*) Well, suppose I were to . . . mesmerize the cabinet and make them put through your reform . . . would you object?

JOHN. Yes. They'd wake up sometime.

LINDA. By that time the reform would be so popular they would neither want nor dare to rescind it. (*Coming close to him and pleading hard.*) You want things done. So do I. I'm offering you a chance to do them. Ever since you came to Ottawa three years ago, I have felt that if the moment came when I needed an ally, I would find one in you. That's why you are in the Cabinet now.

JOHN. You mean it was you. . . . ?

LINDA. Of course, it was I. Why do you suppose I asked you to lunch and tea and dinner, and put you where Uncle could hear you talk? He fell over you so many times, he thinks he discovered you himself. All I did was to give you the opportunity to prove you had ability. I'm giving you the chance now to prove yourself, not to Uncle, but to all Canada.

JOHN. (*slowly*) But if we fail, we shall look ridiculous.

LINDA. How do we look now? Could anything be more ridiculous than to keep people starving in a country full of food?

JOHN. I know. It's a crime. I agree with every word you've said, and your enthusiasm is very contagious, but. . . .

LINDA. But what . . . ?

JOHN. But you see I'm not altogether a free agent. I represent the Radicals in this government, and if a spectacular failure is laid at my door, I discredit the Radicals for years to come. If I skid, I drag down a dozen good men.

LINDA. It seems to me a good Radical would rather do nothing in a statesmanlike way, than try something great in a simple and unusual way.

JOHN. (*grinning*) Well, you're the exception that proves the rule. Tell you what, I'll stay in the cabinet a while longer, if that helps any . . .

LINDA. It does.

JOHN. But I'm afraid you'll have to count me out of the surprise party. Unless you can tell me more about it?

LINDA. (*shaking her head*) I can't.

JOHN. I wish you were coming down the river . . . I might worm the secret out of you.

LINDA. Not a chance! Anyhow, you're all going down the river to get away from politics, aren't you?

JOHN. Will you tell me all about it when I get back?

LINDA. Perhaps.

JOHN. May I say I admire your nerve?

LINDA. Thanks. I wish I could say the same about you!

(There is a commotion on the left. Viney comes in limping pathetically, one arm around the Prime Minister's shoulders and the other around Lorrie's.)

JOHN. Viney! Are you hurt?

LORRIE. Twisted her ankle a little. *(They lower her into a chair. The P.M. is flushed and blown. He stands mopping his brow pathetically.)*

VINEY. *(being sweetly brave)* It's not really bad.

LINDA. Would you like a bandage?

VINEY. Oh, no, thanks, but if you'd get my things . . . they're up stairs.

(Linda goes out, right.)

LORRIE. I'll bring the car around.

VINEY. *(smiling wanly)* Thank you, Lorrie.

STROME *(still puffing)* God bless me, I must be out of condition. I think I'll go up and have a rub down.

VINEY. Oh yes, do take care of yourself. Mr. Strome And thank you so much.

STROME. Not at all, not at all. It was a pleasure, I assure you.

(Goes out right, looking extremely miserable.)

JOHN. Darling, can I do anything?

VINEY. You might massage my ankle a little.

(He kneels at her feet and does so)

VINEY. I don't think it was very nice of you to leave me all afternoon with those two idiots while you stay in here flirting with Linda.

JOHN. Flirting! Good gosh, we were talking politics the whole time.

VINEY. *(suspiciously)* I thought she said politics was a dull subject.

JOHN. Well, she's got some darn interesting ideas about it.

VINEY. Owwww! Not so hard!

JOHN. I'm sorry! Is that all right?

VINEY. Yes that's better. *(A pause.)* You don't really like high-brow girls, do you, John?

JOHN. I like anyone with courage.

VINEY. Yes dear. I'm trying to be brave.

(Linda comes back with Viney's coat and bag. For a moment she stands watching the tableau.)

LINDA. I hope this isn't going to keep you out of the Mayflower trip.

VINEY. Oh no, I'll be all right to-morrow. *(She rises and is assisted into her coat.)* John will take care of me, won't you, dear?

JOHN. *(not liking it much)* Do my best.

VINEY. I think its going to be so romantic!

(Lorrie toots from off left.)

JOHN. There we are! Good-bye. Miss Strome. *(Viney puts one arm around his neck and is assisted out.)*

LINDA. Good-bye!

VINEY. Good-bye, dear. So sorry you're not coming.

LINDA. I hope you have a grand time. Good-bye!

(They go out. Left alone, Linda's courage almost deserts her. John's defection hurts deeply. She moves slowly to her uncle's chair, and sits down, her lips quivering.)

LORRIE. *(entering left.)* He's driving her. *(noticing her distress.)* Oh I say, what's the matter?

LINDA. *(with a little smile)* He turned me down.

LORRIE. The dirty lily-livered hound!

LINDA. No, I guess it's the Scotch grandmother.

LORRIE. Linda . . . it's not too late yet. Say the word and we call the whole thing off.

LINDA. No. With John on my side it would have been a glorious adventure. Without him . . . it's something I've just got to do. And you'll help me?

LORRIE. I think you're crazy . . . but I'm with you to the death.

LINDA. Lorrie, you'll take care of Uncle, won't you, and see that he doesn't sleep on the damp ground?

LINDA. I'll look after him like a mother.

LINDA. You're sure they'll have plenty to eat?

LORRIE. Absolutely. Won't I be there myself?

LINDA. *(resolutely)* Then we kidnap the cabinet to-morrow! *(She begins to laugh.)* You know, a week on the island with Viney is going to be very good for John!

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Two days later, about mid-day, on a small island near the mouth of the St. Lawrence. Low bushes fringe a small clearing, covered with sand. To the right of the clearing a small tent is pitched, while boxes of provisions, sleeping bags, etc., have been dumped down around it. A water keg, with a faucet in one end, rests on two logs to the left of the dunnage.

A party of people are coming along the path from the beach, which enters the clearing, down stage left. Besides the Prime Minister, John, Viney and Lorrie, the party includes Hon. Horace Cringling, a tall, thin, elderly man with very white hair; Hon. Westwood Strachan, a stodgy powerfully built man of fifty with hair cut very short. Hon. Leon Papineau, Secretary of State, small and frail, wearing spectacles which make his eyes look bulgy. All the men wear clothes suitable to outdoor adventure.

Sheila McCoy is a fiery red-headed pest in a smartly cut sailor suit and Lois Dechene is a quiet mannered little girl in a neat sports dress. As usual, Viney wears a clinging voile confection, utterly unsuited to the occasion.

SHEILA. (*entering briskly, her hands in her pockets*) Hi! Look what Columbus found! The island is inhabited.

(*Strachan appears, helping Lois over the log which lies across the end of the path.*)

STRACHAN. Ah . . . someone camping, eh?

SHEILA. (*peeping into the tent*) Nobody home, anyhow.

(*Lorrie and Papineau appear.*)

LORRIE. Here we are . . . (*he stops short on seeing the tent.*)

PAPINEAU. Someone camping, eh?

SHEILA. (*nosing about*) I wish it was me . . . they've got lobster.

LORRIE. Well, of course, I don't actually own this island . . . though I feel as if I did.

PAPINEAU. Perhaps we're intruding.

LOIS. I don't think so, Mr. Papineau. None of these things have been used lately.

(*Strome and Cringling enter.*)

STROME. (*brightly*) God bless me . . . someone camping!

CRINGLING. The evidence points that way.

LORRIE. No signs of life at the moment, though.

(*John arrives with Viney who is limping gracefully.*)

VINEY. Oh! Someone camping!

(*A depressed silence greets the remark.*)

STROME. (*politely*) A charming spot for the purpose.

LORRIE. This is the place I've been telling you about, Papineau. When I was a boy I camped here one summer with two young cousins, and I've been in love with the place ever since. We made a discovery which I thought might interest the Historical Society. There's a boulder somewhere in this clearing. . . . (*Everyone looks for it. The boulder is found down stage right.*) Yes, that's the one. We imagined we could trace a cross here on this side . . . (*They all crowd around to look*) and crudely cut letters. We thought possibly it might be evidence that Cartier touched this island on his first voyage up the river.

PAPINEAU. Hm! (*He takes out a pocket microscope and examines the boulder.*)

VINEY. How thrilling!

STROME. Yes, indeed, Miss Corsby. It is inspiring to be reminded of our glorious history. There is hardly a point anywhere here on the St. Lawrence but which speaks to us of our explorers . . . those brave men who left the Old World behind them, and sailed courageously on into the unknown. Men who conquered every hardship, who cut their way through the wilderness. . . . (*waving his arm in a rhetorical flourish, his eye falls on the Mayflower, steaming steadily away, back to Montreal. His jaw drops, they all stare at him.*)

STROME. (*when he finds his voice*) Lorrie . . . the launch . . . the launch is leaving us!

LORRIE. (*bounding up*) What?

STROME. He's leaving us! Call the fellow back. . . . !

JOHN. Good Lord!

STRACHAN. My God!

PAPINEAU. Mon Dieu!

(*They all rush out down the path. Cringling falls over the log. Viney follows them. Their voices are heard yelling. 'Hey!' 'Hey!' Wait for us . . . Come back there. . . ! etc. Sheila strolls across and stands on the log watching.*)

SHEILA. Quite a stampede! (*Lois comes up behind her*)

Seems to me I heard Lorrie say that engineer is deaf.

LOIS. He doesn't seem to hear them.

SHEILA. Look at Viney leaping from rock to rock! (*They both laugh.*)

LOIS. (*turning away*) Well, it looks as if we do some camping ourselves. (*She examines the stores with more interest.*)

SHEILA. They're coming back. (*she grins*) And are they worried!

LOIS. Ham . . . pork and beans . . . soda crackers . . . condensed milk . . . that's coffee.

SHEILA. Something tells me this is going to be rather a picnic.

LOIS. Sugar . . . canned peaches . . . and lobster . . . say, there's everything here but champagne.

(*The Prime Minister and Lorrie arrive, very red in the face and breathing heavily.*)

STROME. I tell you, Jackson, this is an outrage. We're . . . we're marooned! (*He sits down heavily to think.*)

LORRIE. I'm afraid you're right, Chief.

(*The others straggle back and sit down, panting. Papi-neau takes off his shoes and shakes sand from his socks. No one speaks for several seconds.*)

PAPINEAU. What do you suppose made the fellow go off like that?

SHEILA. Probably saw Jacques Cartier's ghost.

(*Viney gives a little moan of horror.*)

CRINGLING. While I have every confidence in Mr. Jackson, I should like to ask a few questions.

LORRIE. Fire away.

STRACHAN. Take more than your questions to get us out of here.

CRINGLING. Do you know the man who was in charge of the launch?

LORRIE. Frankly, no. My own man reported sick about a week ago, and this chap applied for the job. He seemed a good enough mechanic, so I took him on.

CRINGLING. Do you usually stop at this particular island on trips down the river?

LORRIE. As a matter of fact, I often do come ashore here, to stretch my legs, and have a look at the place.

CRINGLING. Hm. It looks then, as though someone were aware of that. Gentlemen, I put it to you that we are the

victims of a conspiracy.

STROME. Bolton! That damned scoundrel Bolton! He's at the bottom of this!

SHEILA. Whew! Parliamentary language!

STROME. Gentlemen, I see in this the hand of the official Opposition.

JOHN. I'm afraid you're right, it's a frame up.

STRACHAN. After all this, we'll be in the comic papers.

STROME. But if Bolton hopes by his nefarious scheme to embarrass the Government, he will find himself mistaken. The paralysis of business resulting from our absence will be laid at his door. The country will know whom to blame.

CRINGLING. (*from force of habit*) Hear, hear!

STROME. Meantime, we must organize our resources here. We will establish a watch at each end of the island.

JOHN. How far are we off the traffic lane?

LORRIE. About twenty miles. A fishing schooner, tacking with a head wind, might come this way.

VINEY. A fishing schooner! Do you mean to say we have to stay here on this horrible island, waiting for a smelly old fishing schooner?

LORRIE. I'm afraid so.

VINEY. But why doesn't somebody *do* something? Why can't you build a raft, or make a boat, or something?

STRACHAN. A raft! That's an idea!

JOHN. We're about fifteen miles from the Gaspé shore.

VINEY. I tell you I simply *must* be back to-morrow.

LORRIE. I'm awfully sorry, Miss Corsby, I'm afraid it can't be helped.

VINEY. But it must be helped! I've got a golf tournament on Wednesday, and a dance on Thursday, and . . .

JOHN. But Viney, be reasonable!

VINEY. (*bursting into tears*) If you were any sort of man at all you would get me off this island somehow.

CRINGLING. Miss Corsby, I promise you as Minister of Justice that those responsible for this outrage will be suitably punished.

STRACHAN. Well, I move we make the best of the situation. We have plenty to eat, and this keg suggests to me that another little drink wouldn't do us any harm . . . even if it is only water.

SHEILA. Second the motion!

LOIS. I've found the cups.

LORRIE. Good. Pass them over.

(Lorrie and Lois set all the cups under the keg to fill them.)

STROME. Hm . . . Wednesday . . . that's to-morrow. Must cancel that cabinet meeting.

SHEILA. Sure! I'll run to the telegraph office.

(Everyone laughs. The cups are passed around.)

LOIS. Send the message by seagull.

JOHN. Couldn't we try a thought wave?

SHEILA. *(holding up her mug)* Ladies and gentlemen . . . I give you a toast. Here's to the Pilgrim Fathers, who came over on the *Mayflower!*

(All laugh, clink cups, and drink. A dubious look appears on every face. They look at the water suspiciously.)

SHEILA. Tastes funny.

LORRIE. Seems brackish . . . must be the wooden keg.

STRACHAN. No, I think it's . . . *(he stops, embarrassed.)*

CRINGLING. Pure imagination. The water's all right. *(He finishes.)* Just a little mineral deposit.

(Encouraged, the others try another mouthful.)

LOIS. It certainly does taste queer.

STROME. I can't say I relish it myself.

VINEY. I think it's poisoned!

STROME. Poisoned! Surely Bolton would never dare. . . . God bless me, this is serious.

JOHN. Is there a spring on the island, Lorrie?

LORRIE. There's a spring of beautiful water, down at the other end.

STROME. Good. *(kicking the keg)* Then empty this thing and fill it with good water.

LORRIE. We can't do that, Mr. Strome.

STROME. Can't? And why not?

LORRIE. Don't you always say we can't pour dirty water out until the clean comes in?

STRACHAN. Rubbish!

(The girls lose interest in the conversation. Sheila disappears into the tent carrying a duffle bag. Lois finishes her inventory of the stores. John catches Lorrie's eye, and winks.)

JOHN. *(very seriously)* Chief, I never really appreciated that saying of yours till now.

STROME. Farrell, this is no time for theories. God bless me, man, we're confronted by a serious situation.

LORRIE. But you see the point, don't you?

STROME. Lorrie, will you tell me how you can put clean water in that keg until you pour the dirty out?

LORRIE. I can't . . . that's the difficulty.

CRINGLING. (*disgustedly*) You astonish me.

LORRIE. Didn't I hear you say you couldn't put out the dirty water of sound money until the clean water of national credit came in?

CRINGLING. Look here, Jackson, all this is very clever, but we're on an island, nine of us, and we need fresh water.

JOHN. We're also in a Dominion . . . nine millions of us and we need fresh credit. Don't any one of you thirsty gentlemen forget that fact when we get back to Ottawa. Come on, Lorrie. Heave away!

(*John and Lorrie lift the keg, and roll it out, singing*
'Fifteen men on a dead man's chest . . .

Yo, ho, ho, and a bottle of rum. . . .

Drink and the devil had done for the rest . . .

Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of rum . . .'

STROME. (*muttering to himself*) 'Never pour out the dirty water till the clean comes in. Never pour out . . .' Did I ever say such a thing, Papineau?

PAPINEAU. I heard something of the sort when there was all the fuss about prison reform.

CRINGLING. I believe I recall your use of the phrase in connection with the civil service investigation.

STRACHAN. Sure, you said it! You said it every day for the last twenty years. And every time I take a bath I realize what a darn fool idea it is.

STROME. Circumstances, my dear fellow, . . . circumstances alter cases. Now in our present situation. . . .

LOIS. (*getting a little fed up with being the only person working*) In our present situation, Mr. Strome, there's a lot to be done, and somebody ought to take charge of the camp.

STROME. (*beaming at her*) Quite right, my dear, quite right. Every expedition must have a leader. Now I . . .

LOIS. (*cutting him short*) So if you don't mind, I'll just get things started. I've had plenty of experience organizing camps for the C.G.I.T.

PAPINEAU. The *what?*

LOIS. The Canadian Girls in Training. Only its easier there, of course, because the girls all have some idea what to do. (*All gasp at this insult, but Lois goes cheerfully on.*)

We'll have the fire on the edge of the beach there. It's quite close, and there's no danger of it spreading. Mr. Strome, will you and Mr. Papineau build the fireplace?

STROME. Well, really, God bless me, I'm not sure that I. . . .

LOIS. Oh, it's quite easy. Sheila will show you how. Hey, Sheila, where are you?

SHEILA. (*shooting out of the tent in an enormous masculine night-shirt*) Look what Santa Claus brought! (*She does a ballet dance about the stage. Everyone but Strachan is horrified.*) I'm sure this must be for the Prime Minister. Cheer up, Mr. Strome. At least the Opposition recognize that you are a great man.

STROME. Well, I must say. . . .

LOIS. (*to Sheila*) Snap out of it, and show them how to build a stone fire-place.

SHEILA. O.K. Chief. (*She peels off the night-shirt, and, to the great relief of the men, has her own clothes underneath*) Come on, gentlemen.

(*Sheila, Papineau and Strome go out, left, the men looking a little dazed.*)

LOIS. While they're doing that, you two had better gather some wood. There's plenty along the north side, on the beach. (*Cringling and Strachan begin to remove their coats.*) My Goodness, these kettles are dirty! (*to Viney*) We'll take them down and scour them with sand.

VINEY. Scour them! Oh, but I wouldn't know how, I've never done such a thing in my life. . . .

LOIS. (*dumping a very black coffee pot in Viney's lap.*) Come on! (*She goes out, and Viney follows, holding the pot as far away from her as she can.*)

(*Strachan and Cringling have hung their coats on the tent. Strachan makes sure they are alone.*)

STRACHAN. Do you know what was in that water keg?

CRINGLING. No. What was it?

STRACHAN. Epsom salts.

(*Cringling remembers that he drank all of his.*)

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT II.

SCENE 2.

Eight days later, in the office of the Hon. Howard McCune, Minister of Trade and Commerce, and Acting Prime Minister. McCune is above the average in both height and breadth. He is a raw-boned giant. His hair is iron gray, his forehead well wrinkled and his cheekbones prominent. He is quiet of voice, cautious, reliable, and efficient. The office is furnished with a desk, chairs, and a couch.

McCune is seated at his desk, engaged in signing a very large batch of correspondence. A pile of telegrams are on the desk to his right. His secretary, Parker, comes in — a nice young fellow, who idolizes his boss.

PARKER. Marshall is back again. I've stalled him off as long as I can, but he's getting abusive, and blames me for not letting him in.

MCCUNE. Same old story. Our own members are more trouble than the Opposition.

PARKER. Shall I show him in, Sir?

MCCUNE. I suppose so. We'll have to put him through the mill. I know what he's after. Tell him I can give him about two minutes.

(He continues his work. The secretary ushers in Mr. Marshall, a ruddy and stoutish man in his fifties. He looks important and is smoking a black cigar.)

MARSHALL. *(advancing toward the desk)* Good day.

MCCUNE. *(looking up)* Ah, how are you, Marshall? Take a chair.

(Marshall seats himself, McCune presses a button. The Secretary appears.)

MCCUNE. Show in Mr. Sloop the very moment he arrives,

PARKER. Yes, Sir. *(withdraws)*

MARSHALL. I want that grant for the university in my home city and no more fooling. This party of ours has got to show that it is interested in larning.

(Marshall looks interested and hopeful.)

MCCUNE. I'll put the facts before you, and you can decide if you think the grant should go through.

MARSHALL. And why shouldn't it go through?

MCCUNE. Did you know that they teach eschatology at that university?

MARSHALL. (*dropping his jaw*) Escat . . . ! You don't mean it!

MCCUNE. That's not the worst . . . they are teaching the Categorical Imperative of that German, Kant.

MARSHALL. The hell you say!

MCCUNE. Yes, Sir. Instilling the oughtness of the ought. That's just what the Opposition is throwing in our teeth continually . . . that we ought.

MARSHALL. My Gosh, I ain't asking for no grant for them purposes, McCune.

MCCUNE. I knew you would say so when you knew. (*He rises and shakes hands.*) Good day, Marshall.

MARSHALL. Say, maybe I ought to take my boy out of that college. I don't want him to lose his religion.

MCCUNE. What's he taking?

MARSHALL. Electrical engineering.

MCCUNE. Well, I don't know . . . I think they're pretty safe in that department . . . just mathematics, and the like. Tell you what, come back and see the Premier in a few months time. If things work out as they should, we might have a grant for some electrical research.

MARSHALL. Say, that's mighty decent of you, McCune. I'll do that. Good morning.

MCCUNE. Good luck, Marshall. (*Marshall goes out*).

(*McCune signs some more letters.*)

PARKER. Mr. Henry Sloop (*Sloop, a dapper little man, is Deputy Minister of Finance. He wears a Chaplin moustache and spectacles.*)

MCCUNE. (*to secretary*) Take these with you. (*Parker goes out.*)

SLOOP. (*in a familiar way, half seating himself on the edge of the desk*) Well, how goes the revolution?

MCCUNE. For heaven's sake, don't call it that! Sit down a minute.

SLOOP. You seem to be bearing up pretty well, considering.

MCCUNE. This is the first chance I've had to breathe for a week.

SLOOP. You've been carrying quite a load . . . you're own job, Strachan's, and the Prime Minister's as well.

MCCUNE. But what a pleasure, Sloop, what a pleasure!

I've always wanted to use the National Credit in this way, you know, and it has worked so splendidly, why . . .

SLOOP. What beats me, is that the old Chief ever allowed it to be done.

MCCUNE. Yes, I could hardly believe my own eyes when I read my appointment over his signature.

SLOOP. Did he advise putting Clines at the head of the new National Credit administration?

MCCUNE. He did. Clines is a wizard, and has started everything without a hitch.

SLOOP. That's what puzzles me most . . . his choice of Clines. Strome hated him because of his radical ideas on Money.

MCCUNE. Of course, the whole thing has been a miracle. Imagine my feelings when I was told to accede to the Mayors' demands, assume responsibility for all relief, and reorganize the National financing.

SLOOP. Well, anyway, it worked. That's the main thing. And are the people pleased . . . and is business booming!

MCCUNE. Simply marvellous. We've got to hand it to the brain trust after this. I don't know who the Chief's experts are but they surely know their stuff.

SLOOP. Everybody's happy but the bankers . . . they're up in arms.

MCCUNE. Naturally. That's why I wanted you here. The President of the Banker's Association, (*looking at his watch*) will be here in a minute, and may have a legal light or two with him.

SLOOP. (*uneasily*) Well, I'll back you up for all I'm worth . . . but when old Silvertown fixes me with that fishy stare, I feel like a rubber cheque or stamp?

MCCUNE. I know. He's the fly in this ointment all right. And they can certainly make trouble for us if they want to be nasty.

SLOOP. What are we going to say to them?

MCCUNE. I don't quite know. I've a good mind to send them down to Montreal to interview the Cabinet.

(*Parker comes in with a telegram. McCune opens it reads it. He slaps the desk in excitement.*)

MCCUNE. I don't need you, Sloop! With this as a weapon, I can thumb my nose at all the bankers in Canada. Read it!

SLOOP. (*having read the message*) Hot stuff! That's the

only course they will understand. The old P.M. is certainly on the job . . . anticipating every move.

MCCUNE. Six months ago I thought Strome was through as a leader. Now he steps out and shows he has vision, courage and executive ability beyond anything we ever gave him credit for.

SLOOP. The world do move . . . and so must I. I'm going back to the office to alter some letters to the bankers I just dictated . . . of the boot-licking kind, you know . . . now out of place with the P.M.'s wire. God, how I'll enjoy telling them off for once! See you later.

(He goes out. McCune rings for Parker who stands waiting. McCune glances up and catches Parker smiling to himself.)

MCCUNE. You seem happy this morning, Parker.

PARKER. I am happy, Sir, I've had some very good news.

MCCUNE. Oh? Could I share it?

PARKER. My girl's brother got his job back with Northern Construction. He's been out of work for three years, and Grace had to look after the family.

MCCUNE. *(smiling)* I see. So now the Mines Department loses a good stenographer, eh?

PARKER. I hope so, Sir. *(coming forward, eagerly.)* Mr McCune, our policy has opened a new world to young people in this country . . . you don't think the bankers can really stop us?

MCCUNE. I know they can't.

PARKER. Oh say, that's great!

MCCUNE. *(glancing at the outer office)* There they are now. Bring them in politely, and immediately they go, get me the Premier of British Columbia on the phone. And arrange a conference with Clines and Sloop for eight o'clock to-night.

PARKER. *(with alacrity)* I'll do that, Sir.

(He goes out and returns to announce Mr. Horace Silvertown, President of the Banker's Association, and Gerald Thorpe, K.C., LL.B.)

PARKER. Mr. Silvertown and Mr. Thorpe, Sir.

MCCUNE. How do you do, gentlemen. Delighted to see you, I'm sure.

SILVERTOWN. *(coldly)* Quite so, quite so.

(They sit down. Parker goes out.)

MCCUNE. Lovely summer we're having!

THORPE. I should think the last week has been rather hectic.

McCUNE. (*choosing to be dense*) It does get hot in Ottawa, doesn't it?

SILVERTON. Mr. McCune just where is the Government of this country?

McCUNE. (*raising his eyebrows*) Where is the Government? I don't quite understand.

SILVERTON. Well, there is any amount of governing being done, but the Government seem to have vanished . . . evaporated. Are you the Dictator?

McCUNE. (*laughing*) Dictator? Nothing so distinguished. No, at the moment I'm just a hard working office boy. (*pointing to the pile of telegrams*) See that? Those are all orders from the Government, received and executed by me in the last week.

THORPE. But where is the Cabinet? Must we issue a writ of *habeas corpus* before we can see the Prime Minister or the Minister of Justice?

McCUNE. Gentlemen, the Cabinet is in conference with its advisers. Meantime, I am acting for them, *and* am at your service.

SILVERTON. What advisers? That's another thing I would like to know who advised this confounded policy, and what right had they to do it?

McCUNE. (*coolly*) Did you expect to choose the Government's advisors forever, Mr. Silverton?

THORPE. No need to tell you what the attitude of the banks is to your recent course of action.

McCUNE. (*graciously*) No . . . except that I should hope the banking institutions will give every possible assistance to the Government.

SILVERTON. The chartered banks have decided to refuse to handle the credit instruments of your (*with a sneer*) "National Credit."

McCUNE. You don't seem to know just what has happened.

SILVERTON. I don't, eh? I know this National Credit poppy-cock has got to stop. I know it *will*, because you can't finance one day without the banks behind you.

McCUNE. As I said, you do not understand. This Government is now in control of its own financial policy. We have access to all the money there is, and can create all we

need.

SILVERTON. Rank inflation!

McCUNE. Do you think you can scare the Government with that old bogey-man?

THORPE. Mr. McCune, this is all very clever. But I must warn you the banks will not follow you to disaster.

McCUNE. Does what has happened this week look like disaster? If so, to whom? Factories are opening, the railroads are busy, construction projects getting under way. . . .

SILVERTON. That proves nothing. The false prosperity of the past week will not and cannot last. Next week the people will be starving . . . and when you come whining to us for help, the banks will refuse it.

McCUNE. I can believe that. The banks have been deaf to human needs in this country for a long time. But they will not refuse to support our policy, because they dare not.

SILVERTON. Dare not! (*furiously*) Do you know to whom you are speaking?

McCUNE. Yes. I know I am speaking to men who have had a great deal of power, consistently in their own interest. They will do so no longer. The banks now depend on us, and must take their orders from us.

THORPE. The banks have legal rights, and will assert them.

SILVERTON. We serve notice on you now, McCune. Next Monday morning the banks will not accept or handle the credit slips so essential to your policy.

McCUNE. That is your final word?

SILVERTON. That is my final word.

McCUNE. (*quietly, as he picks up the telegram from the top of the pile.*) Very well. I will read you the considered reply of the Government.

"Notify the banks that action of any sort on their part to thwart Government policy will be met by calling parliament at once to cancel their charters! Signed . . . Eugene Strome, Prime Minister."

(*There is silence.*)

McCUNE. Well, gentlemen . . . may I ask you to reconsider your final word?

SILVERTON. (*rising*) Come, Mr. Thorpe. This is not our own dear Canada. This is Russia.

THORPE. It is. The sacred rights and liberties for which

our forefathers' blood are being violated.

(They pick up their hats, sticks, and portfolios.)

MCCUNE. What you mean, Thorpe, is that you have lost your so-called rights and liberties to bleed the "afterfathers" of this generation.

SILVERTON. Come, Thorpe, We've been ruined . . . we don't have to be insulted.

MCCUNE. Good morning.

(Ignoring him, they stalk out. McCune rubs his hands together, returns to his desk with the air of a man who has had the time of his life . . . as indeed he has. Parker enters quickly.)

PARKER. Miss Strome is calling from Montreal, Sir. *(He stands waiting with papers.)*

MCCUNE. Good. I'll take it there. *(Lifting the phone on his desk.)* Hello . . . Yes . . . , Miss Strome . . . I've just seen them. Tell the Chief it worked like a charm. They went out of here as meek as Moses. That last telegram certainly took the wind out of their sails . . . Yes. Do you happen to know when your uncle will be back? . . . Next Monday? . . . That's fine. I'm ready for holiday myself. . . . Yes, up at Muskoka . . . oh, they're very well. . . . Thank you, I'll tell them . . . Good-bye.

MCCUNE. Nice girl, that. Quite a little help to her uncle, and knows enough to keep out of politics. Good thing, too. Women in politics are the very devil.

(We leave them completing the revolution.)

CURTAIN

ACT III.

Early morning, two days later, on the island. The water keg has been moved nearer to the beach, and several provision boxes significantly empty, are placed here and there as seats. To the left of the tent are stretched in a row, Cringling, Strome, Papineau, and Strachan, all in their sleeping bags and sound asleep. Strachan and the Prime Minister are engaged in a duet of prodigious snoring.

John and Lorrie enter quietly, coming off the night watch. They yawn and stretch themselves.

LORRIE. (*surveying the sleeping warriors*) Just look at that . . . What would the nation say if it could see its Government now!

JOHN. Sleeping as peacefully as they ever did in the House of Commons.

LORRIE. Angelic looking bunch, aren't they? (*looking off right*) Lois and Sheila should be getting up soon. (*He finds a notice on the tent, crudely drawn with charcoal on a piece of cardboard.*) Look at this, John . . . "Royal Palace . . . Keep Out". This must be Sheila's handiwork.

JOHN. Viney insists on having the tent to herself, does she?

LORRIE. Not only that . . . the other two insist on leaving her. The ladies in this expedition don't exactly seem to be hitting it off.

JOHN. (*moving away and sitting moodily*) No place like the wilds for getting to know people, is there?

LORRIE. (*to distract him*) Did you see that boat pass close last night?

JOHN. Yes. About one o'clock?

LORRIE. That's the one.

JOHN. After what you told me yesterday, I nearly had heart failure for fear she would land.

LORRIE. It's not very likely that anyone would land here.

JOHN. I suppose not . . . but it would sure queer the works if they did.

LORRIE. Linda ought to be here soon . . . this is the tenth day.

JOHN. The tenth day! Isn't that when kittens get their eyes open?

LORRIE. I dunno. Why?

JOHN. Well, it's worked that way with me. My eyes are open now all right, and I see what a blankety blank fool I've been. Ever since you told me Linda engineered this affair, I've been through hell.

LORRIE. Why?

JOHN. Because I didn't have the sense or the courage to help her, when she practically told me what she was doing. I was the prize chump.

LORRIE. Oh well, she'll understand.

JOHN. If she manages things as well at the other end as she has here. . . .

LORRIE. Don't worry, she will.

JOHN. My God, Lorrie, when I think of the chance I missed . . . I could be helping her in Ottawa, instead of sitting here like a bump on a log.

LORRIE. That's what she was hoping . . . that you'd help her.

JOHN. McCune's a first class administrator . . . if he doesn't smell a rat.

LORRIE. He won't. He'll think his orders are hot from old "God bless me," who is lying there filling the air with music.

JOHN. How will she manage that?

LORRIE. She can sign the old man's name so that he would swear he had done it himself.

(A pause. *The snoring continues.*)

LORRIE. Say, I think I ought to tell you. Linda . . . well, I think she likes you a lot. Fact is, if the scheme goes over, she'll try to hand all the credit to you.

JOHN. Why? What have I done? I let her down. . . .

LORRIE. Three guesses! Why *would* a girl take a risk like that for a man?

JOHN. (*eagerly*) Lorrie, it came to me last night, while I was lying down there on the sand, watching the stars, and listening to the waves. . . . I suddenly realized that I loved her! My Lord, I almost dived in and started swimming back. When I think of how I've taken her for granted, when she's . . . she's. . . .

LORRIE. (*sadly*) I know. She is.

JOHN. Put it there. (*they grip hands*) Lorrie, you're a white man. You didn't have to tell me that Linda might. . . . well, that I've got a chance.

LORRIE. That's all right. No use being a dog in the

manger.

JOHN. But after that . . . God, I'll go crazy if I sit around much longer! Let's get the tribe up and have breakfast.

LORRIE. I could stand it.

(John plants himself in the centre of the clearing, feet well apart, head back, and gives a tremendous Tarzan yodel: "Yillilii-yo-hee-leeeee!" From the right comes Sheila's answering yelp. The sleeping warriors stir.)

STRACHAN. *(sitting up)* Damn it all, Farrell, I wish you wouldn't make that infernal noise! I was having the swellest dream. I dreamt I was in the Members' Grill just sitting down to a planked steak with onions.

(The Prime Minister struggles half out of his sleeping bag. He wears the night shirt over his other clothes, and has a silk handkerchief tied over his head for protection from the night air.)

STROME. See anything to-night, boys?

JOHN. Not a thing.

LORRIE. "Only the ripple lapping on the reeds,

And the wild water, dashing on the crag."

STRACHAN. Confound it man, this is no time for Shakespeare! What we need is potatoes, not poetry.

CRINGLING. The quotation was not Shakespeare, but from Tennyson.

STRACHAN. You shut up! It's all your fault. If you hadn't let that fish get away last night, we wouldn't be so damned hungry this morning!

STROME. Gentlemen, Gentlemen! Let us not waste our energies in dispute. Need I remind you that our situation is extremely serious. Food is getting low, and this sleeping on the hard ground is insufferable.

LORRIE. Cheer up, Chief. Surely it won't be long now.

STRACHAN. I believe it is the intention of our enemies to leave us here to die.

CRINGLING. I give it to you as my considered opinion that we are doomed.

LORRIE. If they intended to leave us here to die, they wouldn't have left us any food.

STRACHAN. Oh yes they would . . . just to prolong our misery.

PAPINEAU. *(after a little silence)* I wonder will I ever see my home in Trois Rivières again.

CRINGLING. *(after another silence)* My daughter . . .

will be returning from Europe soon. She may pass down the river, unaware that her poor father's body lies on this lonely island, exposed to every wind that blows. . . .

LORRIE. Oh no it won't, Cringling! We'll bury you under Jacques Cartier's boulder, if the worst comes to the worst.

PAPINEAU. *(rising and advancing furiously toward Lorrie)* You! It is well for you to laugh! You lure us on this island with cock and bull story of Jacques Cartier's boulder. It is a lie! Never was Jacques Cartier near this island. You are of this plot to take our lives, to destroy our government, to ruin our country . . . !

LORRIE. But I say . . . that's absurd! We're all in the same boat, aren't we? I can't get away from here before you do, and I'm just as hungry as the rest of you.

PAPINEAU. Yes? How do we know that? Yo do not complain. You laugh and make jokes about burying us. How do we know you have not food hidden somewhere, which you eat in secret?

(Strachan, Cringling, and Strome, rise as one man and advance on Lorrie, while John comes hurriedly to the rescue.)

STRACHAN. Food hidden! If I thought for one moment that you. . . .

STROME. Papineau, this is a serious charge. . . .

CRINGLING. There may be some truth in this. . . .

JOHN. Now look here, you cannibals, be reasonable. . . .

(Lois and Sheila come in from the right. Their clothes are a bit rumpled, but they contrive to look fresh and clean. The attack on Lorrie melts away.)

LOIS. Good morning!

SHEILA. What's the debate, so early in the day?

LOIS. *(looking off left)* Hasn't anybody started the fire yet? Dear, dear, you're very lazy this morning.

CRINGLING. It's Strome's turn to get the wood.

STROME. *(peevishly)* All right, all right, I'm just going. *(He takes off his nightshirt and hangs it on the tent.)*

(Cringling and Papineau begin folding up the sleeping bags.)

JOHN. Come on, Lorrie, what about a swim?

LORRIE. I'm with you.

CRINGLING. *(sourly, as they pass him to pick up a towel)* May I remind you again that swimming without bathing suits is an indictable offence in this Dominion?

LORRIE. Oh, take that up with the Opposition. (*They go out, left.*)

LOIS. Mr. Strachan, would like to help me mix the cocoa?

STRACHAN. Cocoa? Is that all we've got to drink?

LOIS. That's all.

STRACHAN (*disgustedly*) Cocoa! I feel like a blasted C.G.I.T. myself. .

LOIS. Sheila my child, count the soda crackers. There's no bread left, and we'll have to go on rations.

(*The girls and Strachan busy themselves with breakfast. The others finish tidying the camp. Then Cringling gets out the camp's only razor and prepares to shave.*)

PAPINEAU. I'm first with that razor this morning, Cringling.

CRINGLING. Nothing of the kind. Strachan was first yesterday morning and the arrangement was . . .

PAPINEAU. (*heatedly*) It's my considered opinion that you know perfectly well it's my turn. Come on now . . . quit bluffing and hand it over. (*He tries to get hold of the razor.*)

CRINGLING. Let go, sir, how dare you!

PAPINEAU. Let go yourself!

(*They struggle. Sheila rushes in between them.*)

CRINGLING. Let go, I say, this is extremely dangerous. . .

SHEILA. Hey, hey, look out . . . that's a razor you're playing with . . . !

PAPINEAU. Selfish pig you are, Cringling! Cochon! Fool.

(*Their voices rise in a crescendo of rage and irritation, when John rushes in from the beach.*)

JOHN. Hi, the launch is coming!

SHEILA. Hooray!

LOIS. Where?

STRACHAN. Thank God!

(*They all rush to look out.*)

STRACHAN. That's Jackson's boat all right.

SHEILA. The darling little *Mayflower*! Doesn't she look too sweet for words!

(*She runs over to the tent. The men all make rapid attempts to improve their appearance.*)

SHEILA. Hey, your Majesty . . . get up. A launch is coming.

VINEY. (*within*) Is it really?

SHEILA. Yup.

VINEY. Oh, it's too good to be true.

(The Prime Minister arrives, breathless, with a few branches in his hand.)

STROME. What's all this . . . what's all this? God bless me, Farrel, you're not joking, are you?

JOHN. There she is, Chief, just pulling in to land.

STROME. *(The mantle of authority descending on him again.)* Ah! Jackson's boat! At least we will get to the bottom of this. Now listen, everyone, keep cool, and whatever you do, let on we have enjoyed our holiday immensely. Hm . . . maybe the best way to put that over would be to stay another day.

STRACHAN. Nothing on earth, heaven or hell would tempt me to do that!

CRINGLING. Not for me, Strome.

PAPINEAU. It is my considered opinion that I've had enough.

STROME. Very well, very well, but don't tell anything!

(Lorrie and Linda in from the beach. Lorrie carries a travelling bag. Linda looks beautifully fresh and well.)

STROME. Linda! God bless me, what are you doing here?

LINDA. Rescuing you, Uncle. Aren't you glad to see me?

STROME. Who is in charge of the launch?

LINDA. And how is the Swiss Family Robinson? You all look splendid. Mr. Cringling, I believe you're tanned! *(kissing the Prime Minister.)* Are you all right, Uncle dear?

STROME. Of course I'm all right. Never felt better in my life. But Linda . . . who the devil is responsible for this outrage, and what's been going on in my absence?

LINDA. If you'll all sit down and have something to eat. I'll tell you the whole story.

SHEILA. Will we!

STRACHAN. By Golly, Miss Strome, you're a life saver!

(Every one sits down in a circle around Linda, who produces from her bag a large bottle, several packages of sandwiches, and a thermos of hot coffee.)

SHEILA. Coffee! I always thought you were a wonderful girl, Linda. Now I know it.

LINDA. *(looking around)* Where's Viney?

SHEILA. *(jerking her thumb towards the tent)* Her Majesty is dressing for the reception.

LINDA. *(smiling and passing the bottle to Lorrie)* Here's a cocktail that would revive the Senate.

CRINGLING. Rather an unusual time for cocktails.

PAPINEAU. I'll take your share.

STROME. Unusual, yes, but circumstances, as I always say . . . circumstances alter cases.

(Lorrie and the girls pass the drinks and sandwiches. Viney emerges from the tent, a wreck of her former self. Every wave has abandoned her hair, the elegant voile is a crumpled mess.)

VINEY. Linda, darling, you've found us at last!

LINDA. Well, Viney! Have you had a romantic time?

VINEY. Oh, my dear, it's been too perfectly brutal!

LINDA. Your poor child! Never mind, you'll soon be safe home again. Have a shot of this?

VINEY. Thank you. Do you know, Linda, we were nearly poisoned when we first got here. There was something funny in the water keg.

LINDA. Something . . . funny?

VINEY. Yes, it tasted awfully queer. But Lorrie and John threw it out, and got some clean water from the spring.

STRACHAN. *(smacking his lips over his first cup of Java)* Ah, that's good! You didn't happen to bring a cigarette, did you?

LINDA. Yes, I did.

STRACHAN. What a girl! She thinks of everything. We ought to have her in the Cabinet, eh, Strome?

LINDA. *(sweetly)* What could I be . . . Minister of Relief?

STROME. Now then, now then . . . what's been going in Ottawa, my dear?

LOIS. Tell us how you knew where we *were*!

LINDA. Is everybody ready to listen?

SHEILA. Sure. Shoot!

STROME. Go ahead. I am prepared for the worst.

LINDA. Well to begin with, you're all famous.

STRACHAN. I knew it! We're in every comic section in the country.

LINDA. Not at all. You're heroes of the headlines. And business in Canada increased three hundred percent last week.

PAPINEAU. Mon Dieu, there must be a war on!

LINDA. Only the old war against poverty . . . waged in a new way.

STRACHAN. Three hundred per cent? Say, how many cocktails have you had?

LINDA. None yet, thank you. Furthermore, the Government has been swamped with congratulations from all over the country. I brought some of them along.

STROME. Congratulations! God bless me, what for?

LINDA. Here's one from the Mayor of Vancouver. "Keep up the good work. Business booming. I told you so." (*passing it around.*) Here's one from the Premier of Alberta. "The Lord is on your side". (*Passes it around, and reaches into the bag again.*) What's more, all the papers have been singing the praises of the Government. Look, here's the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Mail and Empire*, and the *Citizen*. (*The Cabinet look at the papers in stupefaction.*)

CRINGLING. Miss Strome, will you be good enough to tell us who marooned us here, and why?

LINDA. I'm coming to that now. I wanted to set Uncle's mind at rest about the state of the country.

STRACHAN. (*who feels more human every moment*) Perfectly right, Miss Strome, proceed.

LINDA. (*after a smile of thanks for Strachan*) To begin at the beginning, last Tuesday, I got this note from you, Uncle, telling me you were staying on at the Mount Royal.

STROME. You got a note from me?

LINDA. (*producing it*) Isn't that your notepaper and your signature?

STROME. Yes, of course it is . . . no it's not . . . good heavens, I never saw the thing before!

LINDA. I know that now . . . but what was I to think at the time. Read it out, Lorrie.

LORRIE. "My colleagues and myself will be in conference here with financial experts for the next ten days. As it is important that we should not be disturbed, please keep our whereabouts a secret, and hold all mail till I get back. I depend on you to do this. McCune will handle everything at the office."

THE CABINET. McCune?

LINDA. He was acting Prime Minister.

STROME. But who appointed him?

LINDA. The same person who signed my letter, I guess. Well, on Wednesday morning everything was very quiet, and I thought I'd be more use to you in Montreal. When I got there that afternoon and asked for you at the hotel, the clerk said none of you were back. I thought that was carrying secrecy a bit far, and I told him who I was, but

still he swore you weren't there. So then I was mad, and called up Jerry, and we went out to dinner and a show. But the next morning, when the papers came out about your new policy, I began to get really worried.

PAPINEAU. What new policy?

LINDA. The one they're all congratulating you about. I saw right away it was going to be popular, and I thought you knew your own business best, Uncle, and if you wanted to be left alone, it was up to me to hold the fort, and save you from interruptions. So I kept all the mail that came, and when Mr. Strachan's wife called up from Ottawa, I told her he wouldn't be back for ten days, either.

STRACHAN. What did she say?

LINDA. She said that was fine, she would go to St. Andrews, as she had wanted to all summer.

STRACHAN. By golly, that is fine! Now I don't have to take her.

LINDA. Then Lorrie's man came up on Monday and asked if I knew where he could find Lorrie, because the *Mayflower* was anchored in the dock, and there didn't seem to be anybody on board. We went down, and sure enough, the boat was deserted. I was positive then that something queer was happening. Your things were all in the cabins, as if you expected to be gone only a minute.

PAPINEAU. (*looking savagely at Lorrie*) That was it . . . only a minute . . . to look at Jaques Cartier's boulder.

LINDA. I knew that you never *had* come back from the river trip. You might be drowned, or murdered, and all these things being done in your name . . . it was terrible! I felt as if the whole fate of Canada depended on me.

VINEY. My dear, how awful for you!

LINDA. It was. I didn't want to call the police, for you're all such important people, the very hint that you were missing would start a panic of the worst kind. If the public suspected that the new policy were not your work, their confidence in the government would be ruined. So I decided the thing for me to do, was to keep my mouth shut and find you myself as soon as I could.

CRINGLING. An extremely wise decision.

LOIS. But how did you know where to look?

LINDA. I found this map, pinned up on the launch, with the island marked.

(*They examine it.*)

PAPINEAU. (*peering*) So that's where we are.

LORRIE. No, that's a fly speck. This is the island over here.

LINDA. As the situation stands, nobody knows you are here except the people who put you here. But the policy carried out under your authority has made you the most popular Government since Confederation. (*She pours herself a cup of coffee, and allows her last speech to sink in.*)

CRINGLING. Now in your considered opinion, who is responsible for our presence here?

LINDA. Well, what do you think about that, Mr. Cringling?

CRINGLING. (*rising to the bait*) Bolton is an unscrupulous fellow, though I hardly think. . . .

LINDA. It must have been somebody who wanted the Government to reverse its answer to the Mayors' Conference.

STROME. Never!

STRACHAN. Over my dead body!

SHEILA. Over your kidnapped body, you mean.

LINDA. That somebody suspected that the Government would decide a week ago Wednesday to refuse the Mayors' demand and remain on sound money.

STROME. How could that be known?

LINDA. You know you gave the *Citizen* an interview the week before, which hinted at something of the sort. Anyway they decided to get you all of the way, and this sea voyage gave them the chance.

LORRIE. But who the dickens knew about that?

VINEY. Oh, it was on the society page. I told them who was going, and everything.

SHEILA. You would.

LORRIE. Then they must have bribed that confounded fellow to leave us here.

LINDA. That's what I think, too . . . that he was bribed. Well, they appointed McCune acting Prime Minister.

STROME. Did he take their orders?

LINDA. Of course he did . . . he thought they were from you. The first one he took was to notify the provinces that the Dominion would accept all responsibility for unemployment relief.

STRACHAN. The deuce he did!

LINDA. Then he announced that henceforth the National

Credit would be used to finance all public undertakings, and that credit to the value of unconsumed wealth would be distributed as purchasing power to the consumers.

CRINGLING. This is revolution!

LINDA. After that, McCune received signed communications directing the whole policy, even the administrative details.

STRACHAN. The sooner we get to Ottawa the better.

STROME. (*rising*) Aboard, aboard, everyone of you. We are wasting time here. The country is being ravished, and in my name.

LINDA. (*also rising in alarm*) What are you going to do, Uncle?

STROME. What am I going to do? My dear girl, if you understood these things you would realize that I must return the country to sound money at once.

LINDA. (*resignedly*) Yes, I suppose so, but it's too bad. We'll be the laughing stock of the world.

STROME. (*offended*) What? How could I possibly be a laughing stock?

LINDA. Because right now you are a hero . . . you are all heroes. The policy you are supposed to have hatched is a grand success. If you reverse it, and tell what really happened . . . that you've been out here playing Robinson Crusoe . . . I'm afraid you will all look rather ridiculous.

CRINGLING. But my dear young lady, you forget that our first duty is to our country.

PAPINEAU. (*who has been studying the papers*) By the look of this the country isn't exactly suffering. "Depression ends as factories open." "National Credit acclaimed in all provinces." "Strome's brilliant policy starts business booming."

STROME. Hm! Let me look at that.

LINDA. I hate to think what these same papers will be shouting to-morrow. You know how they go for anything scandalous.

STRACHAN. }
CRINGLING. } Scandalous!
STROME. }

LINDA. Yes. They'll probably have headlines . . . "Bachelor Prime Minister Marooned by Wags." "Cabinet Returns to Eden." "Several Flappers in the Party."

STRACHAN. (*crushed*) My God, you're right. That's what

they would say.

PAPINEAU. And the next day it would be "National Credit Vetoed," "Chaos in Business World." "General Election Demanded at Once."

STROME. Look here, this popular outcry is all very well, but what will the bankers and bondholders say to this? After all, they are the people we have to consider. The Government can't go on one day without their good will.

LINDA. Oh, the bankers are all right. At your orders they were told promptly and firmly . . . and Mr. McCune can be firm . . . that if they made trouble, Parliament would be called at once to cancel their charters.

LORRIE. Whew. . . . !

(The Cabinet is frozen with horror at this blasphemy.)

STROME. *(in a hushed voice.)* Linda . . . what . . . do you happen to know what the bankers said?

LINDA. Yes. *(she laughs)* Mr. McCune told me that was the funniest part of it. They never said a word. They were so glad to save their charters, they were as meek as Moses!

STRACHAN. *(getting his breath back, and bursting out laughing)* Meek as Moses! Haw, haw, haw! That's good, that is! I'd like to see old Silverton's face when I start issuing the ten commandments to him!

LINDA. It looks to me as if by this new policy, you have changed places with the bankers.

STROME. There may be something in that.

STRACHAN. They are not the real Government now . . . we are! We have control of them. Hooray! Take me where I can tell the lot of them where to go!

JOHN. Cringling, ten days ago you suspected we were marooned here on purpose. Events prove that you were correct.

CRINGLING. I am usually correct.

JOHN. *(eagerly, playing up to Linda)* Chief, don't you think it looks as though Bolton's scheme has boomeranged, and knocked him for the count?

STROME. *(rising sententiously)* Gentlemen, I have decided on the course we must follow, and as you value your political lives, I ask for your support. Our enemies have plotted to ruin us. They have spent a good deal of money, committed several crimes . . . but what has it profited them? Nothing. The acts which they hoped would wreck this

Government have made it popular. These papers prove that our country has prospered under McCune's direction. Gentlemen, I propose that we outwit those who have planned our destruction. This policy which we have . . . ah . . . found in the bulrushes, we will adopt as our own. (*Laughter and applause.*) The events of the last ten days must remain in confidence among ourselves. In this matter I ask the co-operation of the ladies.

SHEILA. Trust us, Mr. Strome. We won't squeal.

VINEY. I'm sure I don't want to be in the papers as a "flapper in the party."

STROME. Thank you. And before we leave I would like to move a vote of thanks to Mr. Bolton, who has given us a delightful vacation, and ensured the popularity of our party for years to come. I think, all things considered, the joke is certainly on him.

LORRIE.

JOHN.

} Hear, hear!

(*Everyone laughs and gets up to go.*)

LINDA. (*kissing him*) Uncle, you clever old darling! I knew you would think of a way out of it all.

STROME. Your uncle can usually be trusted to see a political opportunity, Linda.

LINDA. There are clean clothes for all of you in the launch, hurry up and get dressed, and we'll get back to Quebec for dinner.

STRACHAN. Fine! I'll catch up on that planked steak after all! Come on, Miss Corsby, I'll race you to the launch! (*He goes, Viney after him.*)

STROME. (*going off with Papineau*) You know, I might have suggested this policy myself, at our meeting, if we'd had it.

PAPINEAU. Very probably, very probably.

(*They go.*)

CRINGLING. Miss Strome, if you will *allow* me to say so, you have displayed admirable presence of mind in this crisis. The party and the Government are eternally indebted to you for saving them both from disgrace.

LINDA. Thank you Mr. Cringling. Really, it was only my duty, you know. And I do think you are meeting the situation in a most statesmanlike way.

(*Bowing, he goes off.*)

SHEILA. Atta girl, Linda! But don't think you're fooling your aunt Sally! If they ever give any trouble, I've got some pictures of this party that ought to make them listen to reason. There's one of Cringling washing his back. . . .

LINDA. (laughing) Sheila . . . you're shameless!

SHEILA. So was he . . . at the moment.

LORRIE. Better give me the camera . . . I'll develop them.

SHEILA. O.K. It's in here somewhere. (*She and Lorrie go into the tent.*)

LOIS. Thanks for sending me along, Linda.

LINDA. Has it really been very bad?

LOIS. Oh no, it was rather a picnic . . . in spots. And I'd never have got to know Lorrie so well, anywhere else.

LINDA. Lorrie . . . ! You mean that you. . . ?

LOIS (*defiantly*) I think he's a perfect darling . . . and you don't appreciate him by half, so there!

LINDA. My dear . . . congratulations . . . and good luck!

(*Lorrie and Sheila come out with the camera.*)

LORRIE. Well, you double-dyed young villian . . . it worked. But I'm gray-headed waiting for the verdict.

LINDA. You've been a brick, my dear. I can never thank you enough.

LORRIE. Don't mention it.

LOIS. (*at the end of the path*) Coming, Lorrie?

LORRIE. I'm with you. (*Lois takes his arm, and they go out with Sheila on their heels. John has meantime been storing the equipment in the tent and putting anything of value under cover. Linda turns to him now with a little smile.*)

LINDA. Well, Mr. Radical . . . have you enjoyed my surprise party?

JOHN. Linda, I've been a frightful ass.

LINDA. Yes, you have, haven't you?

JOHN. I've been kicking myself all over the island, ever since Lorrie told me. To think I didn't have the courage to help you . . . and that you carried it through all alone. You . . . you were wonderful.

LINDA. (*moving away*) Oh no, I wasn't. As a matter of fact, I've been scared stiff every moment of the last ten days. But I kept on because I believed in what I was doing . . . because I believed in you.

JOHN. What do you mean . . . in me?

LINDA. Those were your policies I was working on. I

was doing all the things I've heard you asking uncle to do. You've taught me a lot of economics in the last three years, while I was pouring tea and passing you angel cake.

JOHN. Don't! Don't remind me what a blind, fat-headed idiot I was. You've taught *me* a lot in the last ten days.

LINDA. About economics?

JOHN. No . . . about people . . . and about life in general. You taught me to see an opportunity when it comes along and grab it with both hands. (*grabbing her hand*) Linda. . .

LINDA. Wh . . . what?

JOHN. You told me once you were a politician's granddaughter, a politician's daughter and a politician's niece.

LINDA. So I am. What about it?

JOHN. Don't you think . . . that with a start like that . . . you could take a shot at being a politician's wife?

LINDA. Do you know of any suitable candidates?

JOHN. Sure, there's John Farrell, Minister of Labour. He's solid ivory from the eyebrows up, but a faithful brute, and a hard worker.

LINDA. (*laughing, as she turns towards him*) Well, of course it would be an awful come down after being Prime Minister myself . . . but still. . .

JOHN. (*catching her in his arms*) Darling!

LINDA. (*just before he kisses her*) . . . I might.

STROME. Linda . . . Linda I can't find my confounded shirt!

LINDA. Coming! (*to John*) We'll have to go.

JOHN. Yes, doggone it. Just as I'm getting to like the place. (*kisses her again*) Do you know what I think?

LINDA. No, what?

JOHN. This island would be a grand place for a honeymoon.

LINDA. (*wickedly, in her best imitation of Viney*) Darling . . . what a perfectly thrilling idea!

(*He slaps her smartly on the shoulder. They go off laughing heartily as the*

CURTAIN FALLS

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